1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP 13 Mbundu FP 13

hardship and the cruelty of the initiation camps have their parallel in the trading and slave-raiding expeditions of the past, but this is practically the only recognizable likeness. May it not be that initiation camps were adopted or revived to fill the lacuna that came about when trading expeditions ceased? As an 'educational institution' they do not seem to fit into the culture.

Whether with or without initiation rites, adolescence is largely preparation for marriage and full adult life. Traditionally, adolescence is not a time of conflict or of stress. Young people who as children had already assumed in considerable degree the responsibilities of life met the onset of puberty and made the transition to adult life without fuss or flourish. On the whole there was relatively small chance for conflict between the generations, since the place of each is recognized as mutually complementary. Nor was there competition between the sexes. This ordered and well-balanced society began to change with the rubber trade, and with the beginning of the present century changes have come rapidly. Contract and *corvée* labour have brought profound changes, especially for the young men. As for the girls, a few have gone to the towns; relatively few however, other than those who attend a boarding-school, lead a life essentially different from that which has been traditionally theirs. Conflict between the generations, adolescence as a period of stress, delinquence, hysteria, and other problems, some of them characteristic of our own culture, are beginning to appear among the young people of the mission schools. I feel that these manifestations are quite uncharacteristic of Umbundu culture.

As for adult life, there are no recognized divisions or separate periods. Adulthood comes with marriage and marriage is only recognized as fully complete with the birth of a child. The early years of marriage and family rearing are years of much hard work with less time for leisure or enjoyment than either before or after. It is not postponed, however, on that account. If the young man marries relatively late, it is largely because of the very considerable economic burdens involved. Singleness is coveted by no one. The Umbundu ideal is mature life when one may have acquired competence, but at any rate is assured of descendants and care in old age. There is not, however, any ceremonial status such as the fixing of the wax ring among the Thonga,[1] nor does the mature Ocimbundu cease to do manual labour. There may be some

[1] Junod, op. cit., 1927, vol. i, p. 129 f.

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

885 preference for a polygynous household at this age, but no definite
581 tradition which urges one 'to become lord and master of a complete circular village'.[1] Women are happiest while carrying a baby on the back.

[538] *Onyima yiwa ka yi mõlĩ omõlã,*
Back good (yet) it does not see a child,

888 wails a childless woman. No grandmother is satisfied without herself caring for at least one grandchild. Old age is subject to its own burden of the years but among the Ovimbundu the aged are treated with much respect and deference.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS V–VII

561 THE periods in the life of an Ocimbundu may be summarized as follows:

1. The 'Marginal' Period of the First Week (*ocitete*) until the funicle drops.
2. The Baby Proper (second week until about seventh month) (*oñaña*) (from turning black until sitting alone).
3. The Sitting-baby or Toddler (*ocisembe*) (from sitting alone until mastery of walking and completion of weaning).
4. Early Childhood (from weaning until about 9 years) (*oneñe*). Period of socio-psychological education.
5. Later Childhood (from about 9 until puberty) (*omõlã*). Period of technical training and assumption of economic responsibility.
6. Adolescence (from puberty until marriage). Period of preparation for marriage and full adulthood.
7. First Year of Marriage, during which the bride completes her training under her mother-in-law's guidance.
8. Full Adulthood (from birth of first child).

[1] Junod, op. cit., 1927, vol. i, p. 127.

Vakuacisoko (lit. "those of the set")(1) 561 572

Childs consideres that the custom of *vacuacisoko* is probably connected with circumcision and initiation. It does not exist throughout the territory but only in certain families who belong to the order and are said to pass it on by heredity. It seems to have been stronger in the past, but few practising members of the set are now known. All 'coevals' or members of the set were in duty bound to render mutual assistance, and all had mutual rights to the property of the others without complaint or remedy. These rights seem to have included that of having intercourse with each other's wives. Injury or even death of one member brought about by another did not allow the injured family to seek revenge or legal redress. It was the duty of the *vacuacisoko* to bury their fellows, themselves digging the grave and attending to all the expenses ordinarily supplied by the family of the deceased. They also had the duty of burying strangers without family who would not be buried by others for fear of defilement or responsibility for their debts.(2) Childs describes the *vacuacisoko* associations as "age-grade sets",(3) but gives no further explanation.

"With or without initiation rites, adolescence is largely preparation for marriage and full adult life. Traditionally, adolescence is not a time of conflict or stress....Contract and *corvée* labour have brought profound changes, especially for the young men. As for the girls, a few have gone into the towns; relatively few, however, other than those who attend a boarding-school, lead a life essentially different from that which has been traditionally theirs."(4) 883 177

MARRIAGE

Available information concerning degrees of relationship in which marriage is permitted, marriage-payment, polygyny and divorce has been given above.(5) Evambi(6) and Hambly(7) describe some of the customs and ceremonies connected with marriage. 582

For three nights after the commencement of the marriage ceremony the girl sleeps with her own parents, while the married woman and six unmarried girls whom she has chosen as her attendants sleep in the house of her husband. On the fourth day she moves to the man's house, bringing her cooking utensils. For the first month, according to Hambly, or, according to Evambi, the first year, i.e. until the grain is ripe in her new fields, she lives with her husband's mother or aunt, in whose kitchen she cooks food each night to send to her husband in the *onjango*. When her first child is two or three months old, a present of a pig passes from the girl's mother to her husband. 585 [606]

Childs(8) adds that adulthood comes with marriage, and marriage is only recognised as complete when the first child has been born. A child or an adolescent is only a "potential" person *(onunu)* and the permanency 885

(1) Childs, op.cit., p.115.
(2) Those who buried a man were considered responsible for his debts. Hence corpses were often placed in trees.
(3) Childs, op.cit., p.59.
(4) Ibid., p.117.
(5) Pp.20f.
(6) 1938.
(7) 1934, pp 180f.
(8) Op.cit., pp.119-20.

885 and stability of his personality (*unu* - lit. the quality of being a person) is only proved when he enters the state of adulthood at marriage.

DEATH

361 764 Each village has its own burial ground about a mile or so away. The grave is usually dug by the children of the father's sister.(1) The corpse of a commoner is bound in a supine position and placed in a box before interment. It is usual during the funeral to find out the cause of death, i.e. whether it is the work of spirits or of some living enemy. Accusations of sorcery are frequently made. The corpse in its coffin, slung to a pole between two carriers, responds to questions as to who 'ate him' by forward (affirmative) or backward (negative) movements.(2) In the case described by Hambly,(3) the questions were put by the father's sister. [759] The corpse may also cause its bearers to stop in front of a certain house during the procession through the village, thereby indicating that one of the occupants has caused its death.(4) Should the corpse not give a clear answer, the diviner might be called in to discover the cause of the death. Accusations of sorcery, as has been noted above, are often made *within* the circle of kin.(5)

Special cases

766 For *children* the same ceremony was carried out if they were old enough to walk and talk. Otherwise the diviner's services were called upon by the parents. At the death of twins, the mother has to shake a rattle or blow a horn instead of giving the usual greetings to passers-by, as she had to do also while the children were alive.(6)

766 791 At the death of *diviners* and *medicine-men* other members of the profession take charge of the ceremonies. The corpse is tied in a sitting posture and kept thus for three days before burial. No coffin is used. The questioning ceremony is carried out as for a commoner. After the interment the other medicine-men dance "because they have spirit in their heads", and during the dance each eats a living chicken that he carries in his hand. At the side of the grave a dog, a chicken and a goat are killed, and eaten by the mourners. The *ocimbanda*'s power is apparently thought to linger round the grave, which the chief or village-headman may visit to ask for rain and other favours.(7)

224 766 *Hunters* at death are buried in rock tombs *(ombilia* or *osonje)*, which are usually placed in commanding positions. The skulls of animals which the hunter has killed are piled on top of the tomb. The bows of the deceased hunter are kept in his successor's "house of bows".

766 693 *Chiefs*, and possibly also *village headmen*, are buried in specially-constructed enclosures in the villages over which they ruled. The tomb is a small hut with a substantial wooden door, which is surrounded by a strongly-built wooden fence, or it may be a cave. The wives of the chief 6070 are buried in the same enclosure. The head of a specially selected

(1) Hambly, (2) 1934, p.268.
(2) Childs, 1949, p.57.
(3) Op.cit., p.266.
(4) Childs, loc.cit.
(5) Ibid.
(6) Hambly, op.cit., p.268.
(7) Ibid., p.270.